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BACHELOR THESIS

Overpopulation, Chaos and Human Decay: Dystopian Elements in Anthony Burgess's Novel *The Wanting Seed*

Přelidnění, chaos a lidský úpadek: dystopické prvky v románu Anthonyho Burgesse *Zlotřilé sémě*

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I hereby declare that the bachelor thesis *Overpopulation, Chaos and Human Decay: Dystopian Elements in Anthony Burgess's Novel The Wanting Seed* is entirely my own work and the only sources used in the preparation are listed on the works cited page.

Prague, 11th July 2021

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ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis focuses on the novel *The Wanting Seed* written by Anthony Burgess. Anthony Burgess is considered to be one of the important writers of the 20th century, mostly popular for his famous dystopian novel *A Clockwork Orange*. In the same year, he wrote another less-known dystopian novel, *The Wanting Seed.*

The aim of this bachelor is to analyse the novel in the context of the development of dystopian literature and identify the key dystopian elements in it. The theoretical part focuses on dystopian fiction in general terms – it provides its definition and determines the key elements of the genre. Simultaneously, it provides an overview of the development of the literary genre from its origins up to the 1960s, when *The Wanting Seed* was written. The practical part of the thesis identifies and analyses all the key dystopian elements in the novel and attempts to determine whether the novel includes any warning.

KEYWORDS

dystopia, dystopian literature, dystopian elements, Anthony Burgess, The Wanting Seed, overpopulation

ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá románem *Zlotřilé sémě* od Anthonyho Burgesse. Anthony Burgess je významný autor 20. století, který se proslavil zejména svým dystopickým románem *Mechanický Pomeranč*. Ve stejném roce napsal ještě jeden méně známý dystopický román, a to právě *Zlotřilé sémě*.

Cílem této bakalářské práce je zasadit román *Zlotřilé sémě* do kontextu vývoje dystopické literatury a identifikovat v románu typické rysy tohoto žánru. Teoretická část práce se zabývá dystopickou fikcí v obecnější rovině – definuje dystopickou fikci a identifikuje její základní prvky. Zároveň postihuje vývoj dystopické literatury od jejích počátků až po šedesátá léta 20. století, kdy byl román *Zlotřilé sémě* napsán. Praktická část práce identifikuje všechny klíčové dystopické prvky v románu a snaží se učit, zda román obsahuje nějaké varování.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

dystopie, dystopická literatura, dystopické prvky, Anthony Burgess, Zlotřilé sémě, přelidnění

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Introduction

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to provide an overview of the development of dystopian literature and offer a new perspective on Anthony Burgess as a writer by introducing his less-known novel *The Wanting Seed*, which was published in the year 1962 like his famous novel *A Clockwork Orange*.

The Wanting Seed is a dystopian satire which offers a vision of the future of humankind when the biggest problem is overpopulation and people are discouraged from having children. Overpopulation is the theme that was especially popular in dystopian fiction during the 1960s, thus an analysis of this novel can reveal some of the anxieties related to the post-WWII period. However, some aspects and themes of the novel are undoubtedly outdated or even problematic from today's perspective - it is a novel very much related to the time of its creation and Burgess's personal beliefs and prejudices.

Burgess is certainly not the only author fascinated by the "apocalyptic" visions of human societies. The significance and the popularity of dystopian fiction has been increasing steadily since the 18th century. The theoretical part of the thesis deals with the development of dystopian fiction. Firstly, it defines the term dystopia and determines the key elements of the genre. Then it aims to provide an overview of dystopian literature up to the 1960s when Burgess's novel was written. Lastly, it concentrates on the personality of the writer and tries to explore the backgrounds of his novels aiming to find the inspiration and motivation for his dystopian novels.

The second part of the thesis focuses on the analysis of the novel *The Wanting Seed* and concentrates on the dystopian elements in the book. It briefly introduces the plot of the novel and comments on the principle of cyclical history that Burgess presented in the novel. Then it tries to analyse the main dystopian elements in the book, namely the strict population control policy which the State in the novel implements (including the official encouragement of homosexuality), the role of technology and propaganda, the turn to cannibalism, the abolishment of religion, the outcast protagonists and the State's utilization of the artificial war. Finally, it discusses whether any hidden warning can be found in the book and whether the author offers any hope for the reader.

1 Theoretical part: Dystopian literature

Throughout its history, humankind has always been preoccupied with visions of ideal societies. However, even these presumably "ideal" societies created by the great thinkers of our history were criticized by others who often did not share their enthusiasm for a "better" future.

One of the examples of "a utopian thought went wrong" in our history is the Soviet-style Communism, which originated in Marx's utopian visions, and ended up as one of the most tyrannical regimes in modern history. Together with the Nazi Germany, these two totalitarian regimes have inspired many dystopian works. While the genre was established much earlier, it was the first half of the 20th century which caused the dystopian genre to thrive. After witnessing the atrocities of the two World Wars, society was already leaning towards the possibility of a nightmarish future rather than an ideal one and the pessimistic images of the future outnumbered the optimistic ones. Nowadays, the popularity of the dystopian genre of fiction is immense.

The word dystopia originated from two Greek words – *dus* and *topos*. The term dates back to the year 1747, when it was spelt as "dustopia", and meant "an unhappy place" (Claeys, *Dystopia* 273). A century later, in 1868, it was used by John Stuart Mill during his speech in the Parliament when he was criticising Irish policy. It became widely used in the 20th century, mostly by literary critics (Claeys, *Dystopia* 273).

To define dystopia, one has to introduce the term "utopia" first. Utopian literature portrays an imagined society, which is somehow better than the real one. The term *Utopia* was first used as a title of Thomas More's prose in 1516, which eventually gave the name to the whole genre (Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion* 3). Nevertheless, utopian fiction is much older and can be traced back to Ancient Greece, to Plato's *The Republic* (381 BC). The authors of utopian fiction offered an alternative ordering of society and intended their utopian visions as a model to be followed. Utopian literature thrived especially during the Enlightenment period due to the advancement of science and the infinite faith in human capacity, which was prevalent at that time (Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion* 10-11). Some examples of the 18th-century works with utopian elements are Daniel Defoe's *The Adventures of*

Robinson Crusoe (1719), *The Island of Content* (1709), William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), David Hume's *Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth,* and William Hodgson's *The Commonwealth of Reason* (1795) (Claeys, *Utopias* 29-32).

However, the general belief in the absoluteness of human capacities was undermined by certain scepticism among the intellectuals of the 18th century. Some of them prophesized an inevitable "fall of mankind" caused by its complacency. They satirized and criticised the utopian societies that their contemporaries had created. This scepticism gave birth to dystopia, which is the opposite of utopia (Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion* 16). Dystopia, sometimes called anti-utopia, is often defined as a genre of fiction that projects society in a kind of catastrophic future. Dystopian literature portrays a fictional state, society or community, which is predominantly negative, and its citizens and members usually live under excessive control and are ruled by fear.

Dystopian literature is sometimes considered to be a sub-genre of science-fiction, as these two genres can overlap, for example in the fiction of H. G. Wells. Albeit these two genres do share some features, the primary function of dystopian fiction is political and social criticism. Dystopias generally concentrate on the question of social and political organization, whereas in science fiction these themes are often peripheral. Furthermore, in dystopian fiction, the question is not what kind of technology is produced, but rather how it is misused by the controllers to exercise their will or it addresses its detrimental effect on humanity. Claeys argues that these two genres should not be perceived as interchangeable, as science and technology in dystopian literature, according to him, "merely decorate the narrative rather than provide its foundation" (*Dystopia* 290).

Dystopian fiction encompasses various themes - it deals with the topics of totalitarianism, overpopulation, eugenics, environmental problems, technological progress, etc. Although the range of themes in dystopian fiction is broad, some key elements can be identified: the suppression of freedom of an individual, the abuse of language and technology, the setting in the near or distant future, and its function as a social and political critique.

Firstly, one of the key elements of dystopian fiction is the suppression of freedom of an individual. It is common in dystopian fiction that power is in the hands of a certain group or

a few selected individuals and the strict hierarchy of the society enables them to rule the majority. The political regime is often of totalitarian nature. The obedience of the citizens is ensured by coercive force (the police) as well as by stimulating the atmosphere of fear by constant surveillance. The ruling party or the government suppresses individual differences to prevent a possible rebellion against their regime. People unwilling to accept the state of the world are punished, killed, or expelled. The outcast is a prototypical main protagonist of dystopian fiction and the plot mostly includes his or her "rebellion" and its consequences.

Secondly, propaganda and the abuse of language are common themes in dystopian literature. The freedom of speech in dystopian fiction is usually limited and the groups of rulers utilise the power of language to strengthen their regime, which includes modifying words and often completely changing their meaning. The citizens are indoctrinated by omnipresent slogans. The history of the world is obscured, as the distribution of knowledge is controlled by the ruling party or government. Most citizens are purposely kept "ignorant".

Another key element of dystopian fiction is the misuse of technology. The technology in dystopian fiction contributes to the catastrophic future. Frequently, it is misused by the controllers to support their tyrannical regime, although some authors see technology as a source of evil on its own, as "an autonomous force that dictates the ideology of the future" (Beauchamp 57). In those dystopian visions, humans become slaves to their own technological creation as in E. M. Foster's *The Machine Stops* (1909) or D. F. Jones's *Colossus* (1966) (Beauchamp 57). In other dystopian works, the authors fear the "mechanization" of people caused by modern thinking. Beauchamp (58) calls it the fear of "mechanomorphism" – the fear that humans themselves will be "mechanized" and turned into machines. The theme of mechanomorphism can be found in Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), Vonnegut's *Player Piano* (1952), or in Bernard Wolfe's *Limbo* (1953) (Beauchamp 59-61).

The setting of dystopian fiction is usually in the future, either near or distant, although the exact year is not always mentioned, as in for example *A Clockwork Orange*. By setting their stories in the future, the authors of dystopian fiction use the technique of "defamiliarization" to give the reader a new perspective on certain social and political problems of the present (Booker, *The Dystopian Impulse* 19). The function of dystopian literature is to criticize

particular social and political practices, to warn against a tendency in the society, and to address moral and ethical concerns. The authors underscore how fragile human freedom is, and how dangerous some utopian ideas could be when put into practice. However, dystopian literature is not purely pessimistic. Usually, a glimmer of hope can be found in the story: the catastrophic future might be prevented if one is alert. Ultimately, the authors of dystopian fiction want the readers to understand their visions as a kind of warning and to take actions to prevent their prophecies to fulfil themselves. The true purpose of dystopian fiction is to "make man realize that, since it is impossible for him to build an ideal society, then he must be committed to the construction of a better one" (Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion* 17).

2 The development of dystopian literature

According to Claeys, the genre of dystopia began with the satirical "prehistory" of Aristophanes' *Parliament of Women* and its discussions of Plato's *Republic* (*Dystopia* 291). Nevertheless, the first work described as anti-utopian is Joseph Hall's *Mundus Alter et Idem* ("The Other and the Same World", 1605), a satire of contemporary manners which underscored the pointlessness of utopian dreaming. It adopts the traditional utopian form of a sea journey "to the lands of Crapulia (gluttons), Viraginia (fault-finders), Mornia (fools), and Lavernia (thieves)" (Claeys, *Dystopia* 291). Hall's work is also regarded as a source for the well-known *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) written by Jonathan Swift.

Gulliver's Travels is one of the most important early satires on utopianism, Enlightenment philosophy and religion. It is still widely discussed whether Swift's work is principally utopian or anti-utopian as some authors list More's *Utopia* as a clear inspiration to Swift (Houston 426). There is too much ambiguity to call the work only utopian or anti-utopian. For example, in the fourth book, Gulliver is being confronted with the society of Houyhnhnms, which adheres to the strict rules of "'Temperance, Industry, Exercise and Cleanliness'" (Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion* 67). Even though the Houyhnhnm society has all the desirable characteristics of an advanced society cherished by the 18th-century intellectuals, the reader can hardly perceive this society as ideal - it is a hierarchical system based on slavery and very strict rules. Ultimately, Swift's conclusion is that the

human nature itself is what hinders the realization of an ideal society (Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion* 67). Whilst in the 18th century idealistic utopian works prevailed, satirical texts like Gulliver's Travels were essential for the emergence of dystopia as a literary genre (Houston 437).

"The first dystopian turn" occurred after The French Revolution (Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion* 109). The Revolution was a turning point in political thinking and it also contributed to the rise of anti-utopianism. After this milestone, many works were written as a response to this event, such as *A Trip to the Island of Equality* (1792), a satire on Thomas Paine, which parodied the pursuit of equality and portrayed the potential catastrophic results of the Revolution. It depicts France as a fictional island of "Ulaga" where its citizens are treated like animals and forced to live in cages (Claeys, *Dystopia* 291-2).

The period after Napoleon's defeat provided an excellent background for the development of the dystopian genre, as the general mood was pessimistic (Claeys, *Dystopia* 293). Mary Shelley, the author of the well-known *Frankenstein* (1818), envisions an apocalyptic future in her science fiction *The Last Man* (1826). In the novel, set in the 21st century, a great plague threatens the survival of humankind with "the last generation" of six people left. The work alludes to political failures of the revolution, criticizes the high aspirations of humankind, and essentially opposes the Godwinian optimism that mankind will eventually eradicate all diseases to the point of becoming nearly immortal (Sterrenburg 333).

2.1 English-written dystopian fiction in the late 19th century

Claeys argues that the most significant wave of English dystopian writing occurred between the years 1875 and 1914, when over a hundred works appeared in Britain, and calls this phenomenon "[t]he second dystopian turn" (*Dystopia* 294). It was during the late 19th century that the dystopian genre fully established itself, partly owing to the Industrial Revolution and increasing social injustice. Claeys distinguishes three main "trends" that influenced authors of dystopian fiction at that time – Darwinism and eugenics, the threat of revolution from the socialist movement, and the growing mechanization (*Dystopia* 295).

The first trend, Darwinism and the evidence of human evolution, contributed to the spread of the idea that man can be perfectible, especially if aided by science. With Darwin's theory stressing the importance of sexual selection in evolution, the topic of regulation of marriage and childbirth persisted to be viewed as an option how to enhance the evolution of the human race. Simultaneously, it provoked the visions of the opposite – of human degradation to animalism. Ultimately, it influenced both utopian and dystopian fiction (Claeys, *Dystopia* 295). For example, Bulwer Lytton's utopian work *The Coming Race* (1872) presented highly evolved human species who live in fraternity. Cooperation is emphasized whilst marriages are limited to three years. However, the hero is forced to escape from this society and the author seems to suggest that absolute perfection equals tyranny (Waithe).

Darwin's theory of evolution demonstrated itself in the rise of the popularity of eugenics. Eugenics was promoted as a way of how to ensure the intelligence of the upcoming generations whilst reducing "the overbreeding of the less educated" (Claeys, *Dystopia* 296). By the end of the 19th century, the regulation of the reproduction of the poor became a common utopian theme and likewise the theme of satires. Such regulations provided a source of inspiration for G. Read Murphy's *Beyond the Ice* (1894) or Alex Newton's *Posterity, Its Verdicts and Its Method: or, of Democracy A.D. 2100* (1897), in which the regulation of marriage is proposed and mentally ill or morally corrupted people are unable to procreate (Claeys, *Dystopia* 296).

Connected with eugenics is the theme of racial wars which fascinated the authors of both "utopian" and dystopian works in the late 19th century. In the case of Robert William Cole's *The Struggle for Empire: A Story of the Year 2236* (1900), the Anglo-Saxons won the war, and in William Hay's *Three Hundred Years Hence* (1881), black people have been fully eradicated (Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion* 111). This certainly proves the point that what is considered "utopian" for a group of people can simultaneously embody a nightmarish dystopian future for others.

The second trend that influenced dystopian fiction of the late 19th century was the threat of a socialist revolution. A considerable number of texts deal with the vision of the socialist revolution gone wrong resulting in the complete diminishment of individualism or widespread poverty. Moreover, many authors believed that it would inevitably lead to the

establishment of a tyrannical regime. The texts dealing with the topic of this revolution are for example *The Socialist Revolution of 1888* (1884) by Charles Fairchild or *Red England: A Tale of the Socialist Horror* (1909), in which the socialist revolution leads to the state of terror and the children are taken from their parents to be raised by the state (Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion* 111).

Finally, the third trend that can be observed in the fiction of this period is the fear of mechanization. The technological development and the impact of the Industrial revolution divided Victorian society. While a part of the society supported further technological development, the other part saw the potential perils of scientific advancement and tried to warn people against it. One of the prophets who saw machinery as a threat to mankind was Samuel Butler. In his satire *Erewhon* (1872), the narrator named Higgs encounters a civilization six hundred years after the Industrial revolution. In *Erewhon*, Butler used the method of defamiliarization to satirize Victorian society (Booker, *Dystopian Literature* 105). In the novel, he stressed the high probability of future mutual dependence between people and machines (Parrinder 18). His portrayal of the perplexing relationship between humans and machines undoubtedly forecasted the 20th century "dystopian anxieties over the dehumanizing potential of technology" (Booker, *Dystopian Literature* 105).

A well-known author who was preoccupied with scientific advancement is H. G. Wells (1866-1946). Wells is often considered to be the father of science fiction and the dystopian literary genre (Domingo 726). He was an author writing at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century and wrote both dystopian and utopian fiction. His version of dystopia is closely intertwined with science fiction, as his works encompass the characteristics of both genres. This means writing about scientific inventions and social progress beyond possibility whilst including a warning against contemporary tendencies.

For example, *The Time Machine* (1895) portrays a world of AD 802,701 in which society consists of two races – Eloi, the master-race of aristocratic scientists, and Morlocks, the slave race. In his work, Wells targets the class system, eugenics, industrialization and communism (Claeys, *Dystopia* 300). The typical dystopian theme, the danger of totalitarianism, occurs in *When the Sleeper Awakes* (1899). The novel takes place 200 years in the future. The former leader of the workers' rebellion Ostrog, an opportunist, becomes the despot himself

and exploits the masses. According to McFarland, the novel shares some elements with the 20th-century classic dystopias: the world is ruled by an autocrat, his power is maintained by coercion (by armed forces or selected guards) and there is the oppressed group of workers, whose life "is reduced to a programmed work-eat-sleep pattern" (46). The resemblance to Huxley's *Brave New World* is striking: the children are brought up by robotic mothers in the State's nurseries, the citizens are manipulated by propaganda and they are supplied with art and entertainment (McFarland 47).

At the end of his life, Wells adopted a sceptical and pessimistic view on the development of the human race (Claeys, *The Companion* 114). In *The Dream (1924)*, he portrays an over-populated and contaminated world of 2,000 years in the future, while in *The Autocracy of Mr. Parnham* (1930) he depicts an emergence of a 'fascist-style' autocracy and arising worldwide conflict (Claeys, *Dystopia* 301). It is this scepticism that became predominant for many authors of the 20th century.

2.2 English-written dystopias in the first half of the 20th century

The 20th century can be characterized by a disappointment – in man's nature and capabilities. The idealism of utopia became absurd in the context of the horrible deeds that man was capable of. Utopia has been abandoned and perceived as "either impossible or undesirable" (Booker, *The Dystopian Impulse* 16). The horrors of the two world wars as well as the rise of totalitarian regimes and the continuous development of technology fuelled the visions of a disastrous future whilst serving as an inspiration for many authors. These anxieties gave birth to the two major anti-utopian novels, Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Orwell's *1984* (1949). Although very different, they both deal with the dangers of despotic regimes (Claeys, *Dystopia* 356).

Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), the descendant of the Darwinist scientist T. H. Huxley, was one of the greatest writers and satirists of the 20th century. His novel *Brave New World* (1932) is one of the defining novels for the whole dystopian genre. The targets of his satire are many – it is aimed at his contemporary America, modern popular culture, materialism, hedonism, propaganda and psychological manipulation, and the misuse of science (Claeys, *Dystopia* 360).

Brave New World excels in portraying a society in which there is no visible oppression or deprivation, but its citizens are manipulated to give up their freedom for pleasurable experiences. To ensure the contentment of the citizens, to distract them, and to prevent any disobedience against the system, "non-stop distractions of the most fascinating nature" (Huxley 48) are employed as a part of the state policy. The economic system in the novel is based on Western capitalism – the citizens are incessantly encouraged to participate in extreme consumption to perpetuate the production of more goods. This indulgence is then reinforced by the omnipresent slogans such as "'The more stitches the less riches'" (Booker, *Dystopian Literature* 171).

The novel revives the theme of eugenics and the use of technology in genetic development. The genetic engineers in *Brave New World* use advanced technology to "produce" its citizens in a way resembling Ford's assembly-line production with children being specially designed according to the requirements of their social class. Furthermore, Huxley introduces the technique of sleep-teaching, which is utilized to install the state's propaganda into the citizen's brain. This process is employed to ensure political and social stability.

Much less known than *Brave New World*, his work *Ape and Essence* (1949) is a dystopia dealing with the perils of scientific advancement. It leads to the destruction of the human race (Claeys, *Dystopia* 382). It depicts a world after the Third World War, when the remaining population has to face the consequences of nuclear warfare, and humans are subordinate to baboons. The world is a wasteland full of radiation, people worship the devil and breed deformed children. In *Ape and Essence* all evil stems from the adoration of science and nationalism and Huxley also addressed the problem of overpopulation, which at that time started to occupy his mind (Claeys, *Dystopia* 383).

George Orwell (1903-1950), born Eric Arthur Blair, is generally perceived as one of the most significant writers of the 20th century. Not only did his *1984* define the genre of dystopian fiction, but it also shaped the political thinking in the second half of the 20th century and even managed to transcend its literary form – much of its terminology and ideas became a part of our everyday lives.

In *1984*, the world is ruled by The Party, which has only one goal – to maintain its power. Technology is only utilised to control the citizens in the form of perpetual surveillance through "telescreens" or for the development of war machinery. Otherwise, the process of scientific development has been reversed. Religion is substituted with the Party's ideology and the adoration of the Party's icon Big Brother. The common enemy is fabricated (and frequently changed) so that the frustration of the citizens can be directed towards someone in the "'Two Minutes Hate'" (Booker, *Dystopian Literature* 210).

One of the greatest weapons of the Party is propaganda, particularly the corruption of language. In instituting "Newspeak" and by manipulating the past, the Party is close to the impossible – an absolute thought control. When the propaganda and Newspeak fail, the Though Police ensures the "vaporization" of potential dissidents (Booker, *Dystopian Literature* 211). By being able to incessantly manipulate the written records, the Party manages to recreate the past in its favour – by hiding its past mishaps, the Party perpetuates its image of faultlessness and absoluteness. It annuls the role of the direct memory, as the citizens are willing to accept the Party's truth - "the fragility of memory" is one of the main topics of the novel (Claeys, *Dystopia* 413).

Orwell's *1984* clearly targets the Stalinist regime, but also Hitler's Germany. According to Claeys, the book "summarizes Orwell's political experiences from 1936 to 1948" (*Dystopia,* 446). Drawing from those experiences, Orwell managed to forecast not only the future development of the Soviet regime but also a general direction towards closer surveillance of citizens. However, by setting his novel in Britain, Orwell aimed to provide a warning for the British citizens.

Another important dystopian novel that was published during the first half of the 20th century was Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* (1940), an allegory to the Soviet totalitarian regime. It is set in an unknown European dictatorship and it focuses on the theme of the corruption of power (Sanders 568). It depicts the disillusionment by the Soviet communism, as its main hero Rubashov, an Old-Bolshevik is accused of the crimes he did not commit by the regime he helped to create ("Darkness at Noon").

Some other dystopian works from the first half of the 20th century are for example "The Machine Stops" (1909) by E.M. Foster, *It Can't Happen Here* (1935) by Sinclair Lewis, or *Swastika Night* (1937) by Katharine Burdekin (Booker).

2.3 English-written dystopian literature in the 1950s and the 1960s

Although the end of the Second World War encouraged the feeling of relief, optimism was scarce, as the threat of yet another worldwide conflict arose in the 1950s – the threat of nuclear war. Claeys identifies five themes that predominantly occupied authors of dystopian fiction in the second half of the 20th century – the threat of nuclear war, the environmental degradation, the advancement of mechanization, the burgeoning consumerism of Western societies, and lastly, the angst incited by terrorism (*Dystopia* 448).

At the beginning of the 1950s, anti-Soviet dystopias inspired by Orwell were common. An example of these works is *The Great Idea* (1951) by Henry Hazlitt, who projects the Stalinist dictatorship in the year 2100 and his depiction of such a regime includes strict social stratification, book burnings, and a lack of privacy (Claeys, *Dystopia* 453). Another dystopian work dealing with a similar theme is David Karp's *One* (1953), in which the regime's primary objective is to abolish individualism and support the identification of the individual good with the state good. The dissidents are "corrected" by brainwashing until they conform. The failure of trying to "fix" the main protagonists in the novel results in his execution (Claeys, *Dystopia* 455).

Focusing on the theme of mechanization, *Player Piano* (1952) by Kurt Vonnegut Jr deals with the deterioration of humankind caused by machinery. It portrays the world after the Third World War when machines have replaced most of the workforce and are supervised by the computer *EIPCAC XIV*. Despite not being visibly oppressed or stripped of their freedom, people, especially former workers, are dealing with the loss of purpose in their lives. The underlying message of the work is that people need to be engaged in activities that make them feel useful, otherwise they cannot be satisfied in life. The discontentment results in a revolution and in the creation of the "utopian" society where machines are abolished. Nevertheless, in the end, this utopian state proves to be a failure (Claeys, *Dystopia* 454).

One of the best-known dystopian works of the 1950s is Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), which criticizes mass culture, conformity and reflects the American society in the 1950s. In Bradbury's work, books are banned and burned by firemen, while the popular culture and gadgets are used "to stupefy the populace by saturating their minds with useless information" (Booker, *Dystopian Literature* 88). Bradbury underscores the willingness of the citizens to support the despotic governmental policies and even participate in the wrongdoings. He blames the masses, not the government. In the end, the civilization is demolished by nuclear war and a new and better society led by the intellectuals is rising from the ashes, which provides a glimmer of hope for the reader (Booker, *Dystopian Literature* 90*)*.

The immediate threat of nuclear war inspired many authors of dystopian fiction. For example, Pat Frank in his novel *Alas, Babylon* (1959) captures an apocalyptic vision of the world after the nuclear war began – the disappearance of cities, the chaos, and the increasing lack of food or fuel. However, the novel offers a happy ending – the US population survives, although being reduced in size, and the Americans triumph in the war (Claeys, *Dystopia* 460).

Some other dystopian works from the 1950s include *Love among the Ruins* (1953) by Evelyn Waugh, *Limbo '90* (1953) by Bernard Wolfe, or Robert Kee's *A Sign of the Times* (1955).

Shortly after the end of World War II, the fear of population overgrowth was revived. This period gave birth to *The Population Bomb* (1968), a best-seller written by the biologist Paul R. Ehrlich, which predicted massive famines happening in the Third World countries by the 1970s. Simultaneously, it emphasized the need for direct action including the utilization of literary propaganda to stop the growth (Domingo 729). Naturally, with the burgeoning world population, overpopulation became one of the themes that preoccupied the authors of dystopian literature during the 1960s. Domingo terms this sub-genre of literary dystopia as "demodystopias" (725). They often portray an overpopulated world with depleted natural resources. Harsh policies are implemented by the government to restrain population growth. The lack of food causes the starving crowds to rise against the government, which results in the establishment of a dictatorship or the violent suppression of the rebellion by the armed forces (Domingo 731).

One of the first demodystopias dealing with the issue of overpopulation is *The Wanting Seed* (1962) by Anthony Burgess. In his work, Burgess remodelled the classic dystopia of the first half of the 20th century and made the problem of overpopulation central to his story (Domingo 729). The novel will be discussed in the second part of this thesis.

Another novel dealing with the topic of overpopulation is *Make Room! Make Room!* (1966) by Harry Harrison. The novel foreshadows a future in the year 1999 when all resources are exhausted and the environment is irreversibly damaged, which results in the scarcity of food, water and electricity. To solve these problems, birth control, as well as family planning, is introduced. However, the policy is disapproved of by Catholic agitators and the state has to deal with the protests of the famished crowds (Claeys, *Dystopia* 462).

Similarly, *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968) by John Brunner depicts a world in the year 2010 with a booming populace of 7 billion. The overpopulation provoked the implementation of laws based on eugenics and caused the shrinkage of family size in Western countries. The work is also dealing with the repercussions of overcrowding and its impact on the mental health of the populace (Domingo 730). The lack of space causes hostile behaviour among people resulting in many of them opting for narcotics or going on murderous rampages (Claeys, *Dystopia* 465).

Dealing with a completely different topic, Anthony Burgess's best-known dystopian novel is *A Clockwork Orange* (1962). It is set in the near future and portrays the society in which people fear the violence of youth gangs. The anti-hero of the novel is young Alex who is obsessed with "ultraviolence" and Beethoven's music. After having been arrested by the police, he is subjected to a new form of aversion therapy. The therapy is successful, as he is unable to perform any violent acts, nevertheless, it also leaves him completely vulnerable and even drives him to attempt suicide. The dominant theme of the novel is free will and the question whether people are inherently violent. Burgess stresses the importance of the possibility of choice, even when it means choosing evil over good for it is what makes people human. However, *A Clockwork Orange* is not a typical dystopian novel, since it does not offer any kind of political explanation of the regime in the book, nor it explains the causes of the rise of gang violence (Claeys, *Dystopia* 462).

The dystopian literature of the 1960s was not dealing only with the topic of overpopulation or youth violence. Some dystopian works concerning an environmental catastrophe appeared. One of them, preoccupied with global warming, is *The Drowned World* (1963) by J. G. Ballard. Another reoccurring theme is the theme of human-machine relationship, as in Philip K. Dick's dystopian science fiction *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968). Finally, Michael Frayn's *A Very Private Life* (1968) pictures a world, in which people have retreated to their homes, living in virtual reality (Claeys, *Dystopia* 464). Some of these themes, as well as the theme of population growth, continued to fascinate writers even in the later decades of the 20th century. However, as this thesis focuses on the novel which was written in the year 1962, no further information about the development of the dystopian genre will be provided, as it is not essential for the understanding of the novel.

2.4 The ominous prophecies

With the first dystopian works appearing in the 18th century, dystopian fiction has evolved from a satire on utopianism to an established genre that has become progressively popular. By identifying the contemporary trends which they perceived as alarming or threatening, the authors were always trying to provide a warning for humankind. Firstly, the dystopian genre reacted to the utopian notions of Enlightenment and the uncritical admiration of science and reason. In the late 19th century, it became heavily influenced by Darwinism, the mechanization of industry and by socialism. The atrocious events of the two world wars increased the popularity of dystopian literature and shifted its focus to the dangers of totalitarian regimes. The aftermath of World War II provided no relief, as the threat of nuclear war dominated the world and other catastrophes were expected to follow. In the 1960s, when the world population was exploding, some authors of dystopian literature became preoccupied with the threat of overpopulation. Overpopulation is also what Burgess targeted in his dystopian novel *The Wanting Seed.*

3 Anthony Burgess

Anthony Burgess (25 February 1917 – 22 November 1993), born as John Burgess Wilson in Manchester, was a British novelist, playwright, journalist, literary critic and composer. He studied at Xaverian College and the University of Manchester and obtained a degree in English literature in the year 1940. After graduation, he was recruited for the army and spent six years in the Education Corps. After the war, he gave lectures at colleges and taught at the grammar school in Banbury ("Anthony Burgess"). His teaching profession demonstrated itself in his work. Lewis notes that Burgess was a performer and enjoyed giving lectures – his works are crammed with allusions to history, phonetics and literature (63). He had a deep love for "arcane languages" and even invented his own language in *A Clockwork Orange* (Lewis 63).

The turning point in his life was the year 1959 when he was diagnosed with a terminal illness – a cerebral tumour. Wanting to raise enough money for his future widow, he decided to opt for the career of a professional writer and by the end of the year 1962, he published seven novels including *The Doctor is Sick, The Worm and the Ring, A Clockwork Orange* and *The Wanting Seed*. Overall, he wrote thirty-three novels and over twenty-five works of non-fiction ("Anthony Burgess").

In his novels, there is always a great emphasis on language. Being a language enthusiast, Burgess frequently utilizes obscure words and bombastic expressions. Lewis explains: "His concern is language, not character; he wants to teach and give orders, not bother with the nuances of psychological realism; he is interested in the phenomenon of style and technique rather than in any semblance of nature." (417). Thus in some of his novels, the plot might be underdeveloped and the characters flat or alike.

3.1 Burgess and dystopian fiction

Burgess's fondness for dystopian literature is evident. He was fascinated by both Orwell and Huxley. He also wrote an introduction to Rex Warner's dystopian novel *The Aerodrome* (1941), which reflected the politics of the 1930s and the rising totalitarian Nazi Germany.

George Orwell directly influenced Burgess's *1985* (1978). The first part of the book is an analysis of Orwell's *1984* and then, in the second part of the book, Burgess attempts to construct an alternative version of Orwell's fictional world. In the critical part, Burgess proposes the idea that instead of forecasting the future, Orwell aimed to portray post-War Britain. The second part of *1985* is a literary response to *1984* and depicts society under the rule of trade unions ("Dystopian Fiction").

Having reviewed many of his novels, including *Ape and Essence* and *Island*, it seems that Burgess was an admirer of Aldous Huxley. According to the website of The International Anthony Burgess Foundation, when writing his two dystopias *The Wanting Seed* and *A Clockwork Orange*, Burgess was inspired by Aldous Huxley's non-fiction *Brave New World Revisited* published in the year 1958 ("Dystopian Fiction"). One of Huxley's main concerns voiced in *Revisited* was the increasing population growth, which is the central theme of *The Wanting Seed*.

3.2 Ideas behind *The Wanting Seed*

When writing about the creation of *The Wanting Seed* in his autobiography, Burgess mentions his intention to write a novel "on a theme I had long in mind"– the explosion of the population (Burgess, *You've Had* 33). In his memoirs, he acknowledges two primary sources of inspiration for his novel – Thomas Malthus and his personal experience of living in the East. The novel is set in future England, however Burgess reflects that perhaps he should have chosen a different setting to make his story more plausible – Calcutta or Bombay. In his fictional England, he brought together "starvation from Africa and statutory family planning from China" (Burgess, *You've Had* 33), thus he was directly inspired by the realities of the Third World countries.

Burgess adds that, at the time of the creation of his novel, he was writing a study of Thomas Malthus for an American journal (Burgess *You've Had* 33). Thomas Malthus's *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) presents a prognosis of the progressive increase of population, which can only be stopped via so-called Malthusian checks – war, famine or "moral restraint" ("Thomas Malthus"). All these "checks" make their appearance in *The Wanting Seed*. Firstly, in the form of the population policies implemented by the

government, then by the famine which strikes the country, and lastly, by the artificial war created by the authorities as a final solution to stop the population growth. All in all, Burgess's inspiration by Malthus's economic theory is apparent.

Burgess's inspiration by other dystopias is also evident. As mentioned earlier, Huxley's prophecy about the perils of overpopulation, presented in *Brave New World Revisited*, inspired Burgess to make this theme central in *The Wanting Seed*. Furthermore, one cannot ignore the resemblance of Burgess's fictional world with Orwell's, particularly the presentation of the world superpowers. In addition, Burgess openly admits his theory of the cyclical principle of the government, which is presented in the novel, "was meant to be an answer to Orwell" (*You've Had* 33).

When it comes to the title of his novel, it was inspired by a song. "The title came from a folksong which had, indifferently, wanton or wanting seed in its refrain. The seed was semen and the song was quietly erotic." (Burgess, *You've Had* 32). The title clearly corresponds to one of the main themes of the novel which is fertility.

As for the novel's protagonist, Tristram Foxe, Lewis underscores the resemblance of the novel's main hero to Burgess himself (83). Tristram's time in the army was probably modelled on Burgess's own negative personal experience. Tristram not only possesses Burgess's military number, but he also shares Burgess's "intense individualism" and his natural resentment toward authorities (Lewis 155). However, these features are shared by most of the protagonists in Burgess's novels.

Lastly, *The Wanting Seed* was heavily influenced by Burgess's Catholicism, as Burgess notes in his autobiography: "Finishing the novel, I saw that it was very Catholic" (*You've Had* 34). Despite writing about overpopulation, Burgess underscores that procreation is a basic human need and right. Fertility is one of the main themes of the book and when the human reproductive process is violently abrupted by the government, nature stops breeding as well. Clarke argues: "Catholicism provided Burgess with many of his protagonists and most of his major themes." (24). Furthermore, the structure of the novel is based on a theological argument. The theological argument between Pelagianism and Augustinianism

is a reoccurring element in many Burgess's novels and he is often preoccupied with the duality of good and evil (Clarke 34).

At the time of its origin, *The Wanting Seed* received several unfavourable reviews. Burgess himself admitted that the book required more time and that he rushed it because he needed the money. When he was older, he even contemplated expanding it "to a length worthy of the subject" (Burgess, *You've Had* 64). Overall, the principal sources of inspiration for his novel were presumably his observations relating to the growing population in Eastern countries, Malthus's essay, dystopian works of other authors, and his Catholic beliefs.

4 Practical part: The analysis of *The Wanting Seed*

The practical part of this thesis aims to analyse Burgess's novel *The Wanting Seed* and to identify the key dystopian elements that can be found in the novel. The dystopian society in *The Wanting Seed* is a far cry from Orwell's society ruled by fear. Instead of portraying one rigid society, Burgess chose to portray a cycle – the dissolution of one regime and the transition to another. In a sense, his dystopia is dynamic. In the subsequent chapters, the key dystopian elements in the novel will be introduced and discussed.

4.1 Plot overview

The novel follows the lives of two protagonists – Tristram Foxe, a history teacher, and his wife Beatrice-Joanna. In the first chapter, we encounter Beatrice-Joanna at the Ministry of Agriculture. She is mourning her beloved son Roger, who died after a serious illness. Beatrice-Joanna struggles to conform and accept the official ideology. She has a secret relationship with Tristram's brother Derek, who works at the Ministry and pretends to be a homosexual to climb the social ladder, as the State promotes homosexuality and being homosexual ensures its citizens certain benefits. Beatrice-Joanna eventually becomes pregnant without knowing who the father is.

Tristram Foxe is also struggling to adapt to the State's policies. He is a history teacher and gets in trouble for lecturing about prohibited matters. He struggles to advance in his career, since his opinions do not align with the prevailing ideology. It culminates in him not getting promoted. Furthermore, after getting drunk, he finds out about his wife's unfaithfulness and attempts to confront her on the street close to their house. However, when doing so, he is entrapped in an angry mob of workers protesting against the State's policies. The mob is violently suppressed by the State's coercive force, and Tristram is arrested after being mistaken for one of the workers. Meanwhile, in a desperate attempt to avoid the repercussions of having more children, Beatrice-Joanna flees from London to the Northern Province and settles down at her sister's place. At this place, she manages to give birth to her children and names her twins Tristram and Derek.

In the prison, everyone refuses to believe Tristram's innocence – all because of the higher orders from Derek, who desires to keep Tristram imprisoned. Nevertheless, with the help of his cellmate, Tristram manages to escape the prison and he sets out on a journey to find his adulterous wife. The novel then follows Tristram's long journey to the north and his observations about the changing world around him. When he is out of prison, the world is stricken by famine and the State is dissolving into chaos. The government is non-existent, there is no electricity nor public transport. People established cannibalistic "dining clubs" in the streets, in which they cook and share human meat. They start to copulate on the streets and organize "fertility rituals". Meanwhile, Beatrice-Joanna is confronted by the Population Police at Shonny and Mavis's farm and they arrest her for exceeding the limit of offspring.

Tristram manages to reach his destination, however, after accidentally meeting Shonny, he discovers that his wife has been taken away by the Police. At the same time, a new regime has been established - this time ruled by the army. Martial law is declared. Due to the gradual return of enterprise, money begins to circulate again. Succumbing to the offer of a loan, Tristram unintentionally signs up for the army. The plot then follows his stay in the army with an emphasis on how preposterous the institution is.

In the army, Tristram becomes known as Sergeant Foxe and mostly teaches illiterate soldiers. However, as a form of punishment for teaching about inappropriate topics, he is ordered to join the platoon of Mr. Dollimore. Unexpectedly, Tristram's platoon is sent to action. They disembark on an island and after marching inland, they find themselves in trenches with the enemy nearby. Whilst waiting for the order to strike, Tristram realizes that the war is a facade – the noises are coming from amplifiers, the flashes are from fireworks. Nevertheless, the enemy is real and the battlefield turns into a slaughter. Tristram survives by hiding under a dead soldier's body. When the fighting is over, he smoothly escapes once again and travels to London.

During the time of Tristram's absence, Beatrice-Joanna settles down with Derek, who is now the sub-minister at the Ministry of Fertility. Finally, the novel ends with Tristram and Beatrice-Joanna's happy reunion at the seaside. The government is re-established and the former Prime Minister, Robert Startling, is awaiting his return to politics. The cycle starts again.

4.1.1 The principle of cyclical history

One of the interesting ideas that Burgess introduces in his novel is the concept of cyclical history based on a theological argument. The theory is presented by Tristram Foxe during one of his lectures on history in the first few chapters of the novel. Burgess proposes that political development can be explained by two alternating phases – "the Pelphase" and "the Gusphase". The transitional period is called "the Interphase" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 17).

The distinction between these phases is based on the theological argument between Pelagianism and Augustinianism. Clarke explains Burgess's dichotomy:

> For Burgess, the historical debates between Pelagius and Augustine are transformed into a polarity, with Pelagius's position misrepresented as a fundamentalist version of free will and human perfectibility, in contrast with an almost fatalistic doctrine of damnation due to Original Sin which he attributes to Augustine. These elements permeate many of Burgess's fictions, most overtly in the novels *The Wanting Seed and The Clockwork Testament*. (Clarke 39)

Burgess utilizes the terms from the theological debate to distinguish the opposing political viewpoints. In his novel, Burgess equates Pelagianism with liberalism, socialism and communism. Pelagius was a monk, who "denied the doctrine of Original sin and said that man was capable of working out his own salvation" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 10). Thus the liberal or "Pelagian" society believes in the human capacity to be perfectible. Believing in the cooperation between the citizens and the State, such a society does not use coercive force or harsh punishments to assert its authority – it assumes that its laws will be automatically obeyed. On the other hand, Augustine "insisted on man's inherent sinfulness and the need for his redemption through divine grace", the tendency which Burgess identified with conservatism and non-progressive political beliefs (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 10). Augustinian society does not have high expectations of a man – it understands the inherent selfishness of an individual. When the liberal government becomes disappointed with its citizens as they fail to behave as expected, the laws are extorted by the police. A short period of chaos prevails, followed by a transition into the Augustinian authoritarian

phase. Over time, the citizens start behaving better and optimism is slowly emerging again, preparing the ground for the reinstatement of the Pelagian phase.

The structure of the novel mirrors this argument. At the beginning of the novel, the society is at the end of *the Pelphase*. The State is tightening its policies – the rations are meagre, the newly established police forces oversee the citizen's compliance with the laws. The repercussions for misconduct are severe and can even result in the death of a citizen. However, the State quickly turns into anarchy. The anarchic *Interphase* is presented as a period of chaos. Yet it cannot last forever for every society requires order. When *the Gusphase* starts, martial law is declared and the State takes control over the people again.

Nonetheless, Burgess's treatment of the theological argument is a bit problematic. Clarke accuses Burgess of simplification: "While there is a degree of historical support for his positioning Augustine and Pelagius in discursive opposition, his simplification of their arguments in order to polarise them is a significant deviation from the actual level of distinction between their respective theologies." (42). Despite the simplification, Burgess's artistic adaptation of the argument remains to be an interesting aspect of the novel.

4.2 Dystopian elements

4.2.1 The setting and overpopulation

In *The Wanting Seed*, the entire human population faces a global threat of overpopulation. The world is dominated by two superpowers – English-Speaking Union or "Enspun" and Russian-Speaking Union, "Ruspun". Later in the novel, China gains autonomy and creates "Chinspun". However, the division is based purely on language differences, as most of the ethnicities are mixed. "Ethnic divisions were no longer important; the world was split into language groups" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 16). The division of the world populace into two groups resembles Orwell's *Oceania* and *Eurasia*, or the two opposing sides of the conflict during the nuclear war.

In the novel, British Islands are predominantly inhabited by Eurasian, Euro-African and Euro-Polynesian people. Beatrice-Joanna's inner monologue suggests that Burgess perceived immigration and racial miscegenation as a threat to British people: "Was it, she

thought in an instant almost of prophetic power, to be left to her and the few indisputable Anglo-Saxons like her to restore sanity and dignity in the mongrel world?" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 16).

The novel is set in the future England, however, the exact year remains unspecified. The map of the United Kingdom has vastly changed. The novel's protagonists live in Greater London, which stretches from the south to the east coast. Furthermore, the division of the country into Wales and Scotland is substituted by the division into "Western" and "Northern Province" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 8-9). Special islands called "[t]he Annexe Islands" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 61) are built on the oceans to provide extra room for people. To emphasize how crowded the cities are, Burgess writes that private transport is not allowed - "only official vans, limousines and microbuses crawled the street crammed with pedestrians" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 13). Buildings in the city are extremely high to accommodate all the people.

The world is overpopulated, yet the resources are limited, and the world's governments are striving to halt the exponential growth as effectively as they can. Several harsh policies are implemented in order to succeed in this task.

4.2.2 Population control policies

The first dystopian element that will be discussed is the suppression of freedom of individuals. It is the most evident in the State's policies concerning the population control. The State has several strategies how to reduce population growth. The first policy is the limitation of the procreation of its citizens. They are allowed to have only one child, ideally none. Having more offspring is characteristic only of the lower classes in the society. When Beatrice-Joanna's only son Roger dies, she is told to be realistic: "You've had your recommended ration. No more motherhood for you. Try to stop feeling like a mother." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 5). As there are simply too many people, the State does not care about the lives of the citizens – for example, it failed to prevent Roger's unnecessary death by not providing him with the healthcare he needed.

In an overpopulated world, human life simply lost its value. The State prefers its populace dead, rather than alive and starving, which explains the reluctance to provide any healthcare.

The Ministry of Agriculture, particularly the Phosphorus Reclamation Department, deals with the dead citizens – it turns them into phosphorus pentoxide and uses them as a fertilizer. Dr. Acheston, a worker at the Department, recapitulates the State's rationale: "Think of this in national terms, in global terms. One mouth less to feed. One more half-kilo of phosphorus pentoxide to nourish the earth." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 4). The fact that people are utilized as a fertilizer stresses the level of dehumanization in Burgess's dystopian society.

The second strategy the State adopts is the official endorsement of homosexuality and voluntary sterilization:

> That sort of thing was now encouraged – anything to divert sex from its natural end – and all over the country blared posters put out by the Ministry of Infertility, showing, in ironical nursery colours, an embracing pair of one sex or the other with the legend *It's Sapiens to be Homo.* (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 6)

The citizens are evaluated according to their sexual preference and being homosexual or sterilized ensures them smoother advancement on the social ladder or secures them a successful career. The State has "The Homosex Institute", an institution that offers "night-classes" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 6) - one can assume that these classes serve to spread the State's propaganda. The clear preference of homosexuals over heterosexuals is what hinders Tristram's promotion. Nonetheless, throughout the novel, it becomes progressively apparent that this particular policy has many flaws. It is being exploited by some of the citizens – they pretend to be homosexual, although they are not. The greatest example is Tristram's brother Derek, who secures a high position at the Ministry of Infertility owing to his public disguise as a homosexual.

Ultimately, these policies are not as effective as the State needs, plus they are not properly reinforced. Some people, particularly religious people and those of lower classes, ignore the State's recommendations and choose to have children anyway. The fear of population growth results in the inevitable tightening of the regime, in which the freedom of the citizens is further suppressed. The official change of the State's policy can be witnessed in chapter thirteen when the Prime Minister gives a speech on national television explaining the transformation of the regime. He announces that repressive measures will be taken to stop

the population growth and declares a "war on irresponsibility" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 53) – war against those disobedient people who defy the laws of the State:

> All over the planet, said the luminous face with gravity, the leaders of state would be speaking – tonight or tomorrow – in a similar urgent terms to their various peoples; the whole world was declaring war on itself. The severest punishments for continued irresponsibility (hurting the punishers more than the punished, it was implied); planetary survival dependent on the balance of population and scientifically calculated minimal food supply; tighten belts; win through; evil things they would be fighting; pull together; long live the King. (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 53)

Burgess's depiction of the PM's speech is quite satirical and seems to mock political speeches, as it does contain overused expressions like "tighten bells" or "pull together" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 53). It also includes traces of manipulation. The citizens cannot be trusted anymore, thus they have to be made obedient and it is all "for their own good".

Burgess portrays the shift from the more relaxed and liberal State to the regime which does not hesitate to ensure the obedience of its citizens by coercion. New corps, named the Population Police, are established to oversee the citizens abiding the rules and to perpetuate the atmosphere of fear. That creates a pervasive atmosphere of oppression, as people become more and more fearful. For example, one Tristram's student becomes an orphan after his mother is arrested for illegal pregnancy.

Concurrently, the governments in the rest of the world employ similar measures, some of them ever harsher than those in Enspun. For example, in China, the government organizes mass executions of those who do not comply with the new policies. Overall, the State's strict population control policies can be identified as one of the strongest dystopian elements in the novel, as they suppress the citizens' freedom – principally they limit their rights to procreate, their freedom of speech (as the citizens cannot openly criticize the apparatus) and impose fatal consequences on those who disobey – even death.

4.2.3 Rationing

Another dystopian element that can be found in the novel is rationing, which is clearly a consequence of the overpopulated world. All food is strictly rationed by the State. The

society itself is mostly vegetarian and the food is partly synthetic. For example, Beatrice-Joanna serves Tristram "a cutlet of reconstituted vegetable dehydrate, cold" and for a dessert "a slice of synthelac pudding" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 51). To ensure that the citizens meet their nutritional needs, The Ministry of Synthetic Food distributes a supplement called a "nut"/"a nutrition-unit" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 51), which is supposedly some kind of vitamin supplement. The only alcoholic drink that is available is called "alc", "a pungent distillation from vegetable and fruit-peel" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 37). This drink is particularly popular with the lower classes. Except for alc, the citizens do not have any other options of intoxication – they cannot drink or smoke. The plants formerly grown for the production of beer, wine and tobacco are no longer cultivated, as all the land is utilized to grow only edible plants.

Later in the novel, the rations are cut even more. Rationing is what primarily causes the strife between the State and its citizens. As the rations are progressively cut down, the citizens become disobedient. For example, the workers of the National Synthefabric Works organize a protest in the streets against further rationing. Their ringleader is furious: "If they want a fair day's work they've got to bloody feed us proper" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 87).

Burgess portrays rationing as a logical consequence of overpopulation. Since all the land is used to grow edible plants, it is understandable that it cannot be utilized to grow tobacco or similar plants. The lives of the citizens are stripped of many pleasures. Food fulfils its primary function of satisfying hunger, yet it does not bring any enjoyment. The fact that the citizens are forced to eat synthetic food or vegetable dehydrates whilst having to rely on supplements to meet their nutritional needs emphasizes the unnaturalness and deformity of Burgess's dystopian society.

4.2.4 Coercive forces

The third dystopian element that can be identified in the novel is the role of coercive forces in supporting the State and reinforcing its policies. At the beginning of the novel, when the State is more liberal, the police are not essential to its functioning. However, the coercive forces in the regime are steadily becoming more important as the story progresses. The main police force is represented by "the greyboys" dressed in grey uniforms and armed with truncheons. New men are recruited mainly from criminals and the unemployed. Tristram

explains the occurrence of the new police force in the streets as "the end of the Pelphase: people were going to be made to be good" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 36). The liberal society is too loosely regulated and even some of the citizens are calling for greater control. As the story progresses, policemen in the streets become more common. The rising number of policemen in the streets serves as an ominous sign of the end of the liberal era and foreshadows the coming of a new regime, a stricter one.

Slowly, police brutality becomes a part of the citizens' everyday life. They cannot express their discontent with the current situation, as they could face serious repercussions for it. For example, Mrs Gow's husband has been shot because "he'd merely rasped a brief rude noise at a knot of policemen outside one of the rougher drinking-shops" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 59). Adding to that, Beatrice-Joanna witnesses a group of policemen violently beating up an old man in the streets: "Five young greyboys, lit by a streetlamp, were laughingly beating up a bewildered-looking old man who appeared, from his lack of response to the slaps and truncheonings, anaesthetized by alc." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 64). Burgess depicts the police as a violent organization that frequently abuses its power against innocent citizens.

Nonetheless, the greatest example of police brutality in Burgess's dystopian society is the violent suppression of the workers' protest. The workers of the National Synthefabric Works are on a strike due to the meagre rations that they receive from the government. However, the protest quickly escalates into a brutal conflict between them and the greyboys armed with carbines. The conflict results in all the workers being arrested and taken to prison. The freedom of speech is violated – citizens cannot protest and are met with the brute force of the State's watchdogs.

The second body that ensures the citizens' obedience is the Population Police (the Poppol). It is a specialized force established to oversee society's adherence to the rules strictly concerning population control. Their supervisor, the Metropolitan Commissioner, is no one else than Derek Foxe, Tristram's brother. They wear a black uniform, and they have the symbol of a breaking egg on their badge. However, these special corps differ greatly from the savage greyboys, as they are mostly unarmed, polite and generally less violent. During Beatrice-Joanna's escape, the train station is swarming with members of the Population

Police trying to expose pregnant women: “They examined the women passengers insolently, as with eyes expert at burrowing to illegal pregnancies.” (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 93). Pregnant women are then arrested. Members of the Population Police occur in the novel once again, when they are searching for Beatrice-Joanna and her “illegal offspring” (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 157). They visit Shonny’s State Farm NW313. Armed with a warrant, they search the property whilst threatening Shonny and his family. Nevertheless, Captain Loosley and Sergeant Image appear more like comic characters, not like a force to be reckoned with. They are a great example of Burgess’s satirical portrayal of authorities.

The role of the police in the novel fades away when the regime spirals into chaos. When the government becomes non-existent, so does the police. Later in the novel, when Tristram wanders through a city on his journey to find his wife, “[h]e saw no police; they all seemed absorbed or digested into the generality” (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 169). At the end of the novel, when the Government starts to function again, the role of the police is essentially substituted by the army.

All in all, Burgess’s treatment of the police forces in his novel corresponds with the perception of the police as a force utilized by the state to ensure the obedience of its citizens. The increasing number of policemen in the streets represents the turn of the regime towards totalitarianism and serves as an ominous sign of the society’s fall into a state of depravity. Judging by his portrayal of the police, Burgess seems to perceive it as an inherently violent institution, as the Government’s weapon, which can be used against the citizens if they refuse to conform. Furthermore, his policemen, particularly greyboys, clearly abuse their power to terrorize innocent civilians. The depiction of the police brutality in the novel undoubtedly contributes to the overall dystopian atmosphere of Burgess’s society, as the citizens fear the potential conflicts between them and the police and try to avoid it at all cost.

4.2.5 Technology

The role of technology in the novel is only peripheral. The State does not misuse technology to perpetuate its rule nor to control its citizens. However, Burgess hints that his society does possess some advanced technology, which is mostly shown in the form of gadgets that the characters use on an everyday basis. In their homes, the citizens consume news from the main information service in the State, *The Daily Newsdisc,* which has the form of a black

shining disc placed on a "wall-spindle" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 26). Homes can be controlled by "the wall-panel of buttons and switches" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 26). The furniture can be summoned by the buttons, which contributes to the futuristic atmosphere of the city. The refrigerator descends from the ceiling, the chair from the wall, and the table can rise from the floor. The television screen is placed on the ceiling, instead of its standard place on the wall, and it can be turned on by a switch by the bedhead. The characters wear a "wrist micro-radio, which has a watch-face on its back" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 44). It is obvious that Burgess did not show much creativity when devising the technology of his future England. When it comes to the technology in the army, no technological progress can be observed. The British Army in the novel does not own any advanced technology, instead, the machinery used in the war is rather backwards, suspiciously resembling the "obsolete" technology from WWI:

> Rifles – there had been, Tristram knew, rifles in hose ancient preatomic wars; the organization, nomenclature, procedure, armament of this new British Army all seemed to have come out of old books, old films. Rifles, indeed. (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 228)

Since *The Wanting Seed* is not a dystopian novel concentrating on the perils of technological advancement, it is hardly surprising that Burgess did not introduce any cutting-edge technology. Instead, his depiction of the technology clearly inspired by the realities of his time accentuates the intended satire. Moreover, his society does not appear as distant as a society filled with unbelievable futuristic inventions would.

4.2.6 Propaganda

When it comes to propaganda, it seems that it plays a certain role in supporting the Government, however, not many examples of the State's propaganda can be found in the novel. The Ministry of Propaganda functions in the State, yet it is mentioned only once in the novel. Similarly, not many brainwashing slogans can be found in the novel. One of the few examples of a slogan is the motto "*It's Sapiens to be Homo.*" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 6) on the omnipresent posters issued by the Ministry of Infertility. This particular slogan is based on wordplay and has a comical effect. The posters seem to be one of the means that the Government uses to share its ideology. Another poster seen by Beatrice-

Joanna says: "*Don't have any More*" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 21) and it obviously concerns the one-child policy.

When it comes to the abuse of language, one example can be identified in the novel. The State attempts to discredit religion by replacing the word God with *Dog*. This results in the protagonists using expressions such as "Dognose", "For Dogsake", "Good Dog", or saying sentences such as "Thank Dog for that" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 46) or "What in Dogsname are you doing here?" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 47). In these cases, Burgess's employment of wordplay evokes a comical effect rather than a feeling of terror.

Adding to that, the Government in Burgess's novel devised a fictional symbol that the State calls "Mr Livedog", a sort of caricature of God (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 12). The symbol is then utilized in a propagandistic way:

> All the boys smiled. They all loved *The Adventures of Mr Livedog in the Cosmicomic*. Mr Livedog was a big funny fubsy demiurge who, … spawned unwanted life all over the earth. Overpopulation was his doing. In none of his adventures, however, did he ever win: Mr Homo, his human boss, always brought him to heel. (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 12)

Overall, albeit it is implied in the novel that the Government utilizes propaganda to influence the minds of the citizens and the characters appear to be affected by it, not many examples of such instances can be found in the novel.

4.2.7 Cannibalism, chaos and fertility rituals

The next dystopian element that can be spotted in the novel is the society's turn to cannibalism. At the beginning of the third part of the novel, the world population is faced with another challenge – a worldwide famine. Suddenly, crops and vegetables become infected and lethal diseases are spreading among animals. The water starts stinking and dead fish are "washed ashore": "It was a blight never known before, its configuration under the microscope not cognate with any other pattern of disease, and it proved resistant to all the poisons the Global Agricultural Authority could devise." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 109).

The reason why Burgess introduced this apocalyptic catastrophe seems to be to convey a religious message. The blight appears as God's punishment for the unnatural, distorted ways of life the people in his future England are living. When people stop breeding, nature stops breeding as well. Or at least that is how the religious characters in the novel understand this unforeseen blight. For example, the Catholic Shonny expounds: "We're all going to starve, God bless us, if we don't pray for forgiveness for our blasphemous ways. Sinning against the light, denying life. The way things are going is being sent as a divine judgement on the lot of us!" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 100-101).

Naturally, food riots all over the world commence. The world leaders start panicking, including the British PM Robert Startling. This is where the novel takes a very dark turn – famished people turn to cannibalism. First instances of mean-eating appear - a young boy is eaten in Banff, Alberta. Meanwhile, the Government of PM Starling has fallen and chaos reigns. The buses and trains stopped running, the electricity and other public utilities failed. People have no information about what is happening as the information services vanished as well. Burgess attempted to foreshadow what would happen if the State failed to fulfil the basic needs of its citizens – it would prompt a state of anarchy.

Surprisingly, it does not take very long before cannibalism is being accepted as a new societal standard. People start organizing street dining clubs and barbeques, where man-flesh is eaten. Yet Burgess does not depict these dining clubs negatively, he does not condemn the people who participate in man-eating. Contrarily, he presents their hosts as civil and generous. For example, when Tristram escapes from prison, he is invited to one of these dining clubs and meat is offered to him. Starving Tristram does not hesitate to accept the offer and he is genuinely surprised at the altruism of the people in the club.

Burgess does not portray this chaotic period as a state of omnipresent horror, which one would expect it to be. It seems that his depiction of the anarchic *Interphase* is a depiction of a state, in which true freedom flourishes. A man named Sinclair gives Tristram this piece of advice: "When the State withers, humanity flowers. There are some very nice people about these days. Still, hang on to that weapon of yours." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 166). Burgess's chaotic state is undoubtedly dangerous, yet it offers people the opportunity to

return to their atavistic roots. The cannibalistic clubs are soon followed by people copulating on the streets and conducting fertility rituals resembling medieval carnivals:

> It was reported from Brodick on the Isle of Arran that a vast communal nocturnal gorge of man-flesh had been followed by a heterosexual orgy in the ruddy light of the fat-spitting fires and that, the morning after, the root known as salsify was seen sprouting from the pressed earth. (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 131)

These lines imply that as soon as people return to the "natural ways", as soon as they are allowed to procreate, the earth becomes fertile again and plants begin growing. "All life was one. That blight had been man's refusal to breed." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 174-5). The love rituals are accompanied by the return to religion as well - improvised masses are organized. The society changed from a society that preferred infertility to one which worships fertility – and that Burgess perceives as positive.

Even after the period of chaos ends, the society does not abstain from eating man-flesh. Instead, Burgess introduces the idea of cannibalism in its "civilized" form – human flesh is officially distributed in tins. The product is called "bully" by the troops (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 194). Later in the novel, tins with Chinese letters on them are distributed among the soldiers in the British Army. Tristram is not surprised to find out that the meat is of human origin: "The Romanized transliteration was clear at the bottom of the label. Ripe, soft, properly cooked man." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 250). In his novel, Burgess presents cannibalism as a partial solution to famine and overpopulation. He argues that man is essentially carnivorous and meat-eating is natural to humankind, in contrast with the abnormality of the mostly vegetarian society at the beginning of the novel. Cannibalism becomes the new norm of his dystopian society, against which no one (except Beatrice-Joana) seems to have any objections. One can only speculate whether Burgess's approval of exophagy was real. Yet, according to Lewis, in the preface to the 1982 edition of *The Wanting Seed*, Burgess "looked forward to the day when we will find 'cans of meat in our markets called Mench or Munch, human flesh seasoned with sodium nitrate'" (Lewis 153). Apparently, Burgess was also irritated that a similar idea was introduced in 1966 by Harry Harrison, the author of *Make Room! Make Room!* (Lewis 153). Nevertheless, for the reader,

a vision of the society where cannibalism is approved by the State is undoubtedly a dystopian one.

4.2.8 War

Another prominent dystopian element in the novel is the role of war as a sort of mechanism used to counterbalance the rising population growth. Furthermore, the satirical depiction of the army in Burgess's novel emphasizes the absurdity of such an institution and was probably fuelled by his own experience with the British Army.

The army appears in the novel when the society transitions into the last political phase, *the Gusphase*, which is more authoritarian than its precedents. The army quickly adopts the role of the keeper of order, simply because the society cannot function in the state of anarchy forever. Soon enough, national martial law is declared and people are ordered back to work under the threat of drastic penalties.

The idea of war is at first unthinkable to Tristram. When he meets a soldier who is prophesizing that war will come soon, he is reluctant to believe it: "War's outlawed. There hasn't been any war for years and years and years." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 196). The overpopulated society did not know war, people were living in a period of "Perpetual Peace" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 10). Yet the soldier argues that that is the exact reason why there will be one very soon. He adds that the true purpose of war is to keep armies busy until someone orders them to stop. The pure existence of armies implies the existence of war. By introducing this idea, Burgess underscores the extreme futility of armed conflicts.

The army is depicted as a senseless institution. Even the process of recruitment is absurd. The army distributes food among the starving people in "*WD North-West District Communal Feeding Centre*" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 208). A few people succumb to the offer of a governmental loan and put their names on the list without knowing what they are truly signing up for. However, only a few minutes later they discover that they signed a contract with the British Army. The whole description of the process of the recruitment is satirical in tone – for example, one of the recruits is an older woman, another one an illiterate man. This is how Tristram gets recruited as well and it all appears very coincidental.

Later in the novel, for teaching the soldiers about unsuitable topics, Tristram is transferred to the platoon of Mr. Dollimore, who is an expendable in the army. His platoon consists of analphabets and "thugs, corner-boys, sexual perverts, gibberers, morons" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 229). Mr. Dollimore has been successfully brainwashed by his training and he is an ardent admirer of the idea of heroic death on the battlefield. Simultaneously, he is extremely unaware of the platoon's true purpose. When Tristram questions him about the possibility of their platoon being sent into action, Dollimore responds: "I thought this was meant to be a sort of action, really. I thought we were sort of doing protection job." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 230). Nobody in the army knows what they are doing, what they are being trained for and Tristram seems to be almost the only one who poses serious questions. The only character who is as sceptical as Tristram is Sergeant Lightbody, who expects the soldiers to be killed by either bombing or by poison gas by the very people who produce the war machinery. He prophesizes "an era of endless war" to come, a war far from civilians (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 233).

Sergeant Lightbody's prophecy is not so far from the truth as the conflict appears to be a trap. Tristram is the first one who decodes the true nature of the conflict when he notices a regular rhythm in the noises supposedly coming from the battlefield. "Loud amplifiers. Magnesium flashes. Electronic war, gramophony war. And the enemy, poor devils, are seeing and hearing it too." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 248). Burgess presents the daunting idea of a fake war designed by the State. For the State, it is the ultimate solution to its overpopulation problem: "This is the new way, the modern way, of dealing with excess population." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 253). What is even more shocking is the revelation of who the enemy is. They are women, trained in the Army in the same way as men.

To explain the Government's intentions, Burgess introduces a character named Major Berkeley. Major Berkeley openly confirms Tristram's theory: it is happening on the West Coast of Ireland and the massacre is officially called the "Extermination Session" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 277), devised by the Government to deal with the booming populace. The War Department acts under the orders from a newly established institution "The Global Population Limitation Authority" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 277). The purpose of this

institution is to observe the population and predict future development in the relation to the food supply. Major Berkeley explains the State's rationale:

> You see, what other way is there of keeping the population down? The birth-rate rose phenomenally last year and it is still rising. Not, of course, that there's anything wrong with that. Contraception is cruel and unnatural: everybody has a right to be born. But, similarly, everybody's got to die sooner or later. (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 278)

The State offers the citizens glorious soldier's death. Concurrently, the war is a great opportunity to "clean" the society of criminals and unsuitable people. It becomes the "drainage system" of the State (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 279). Furthermore, it is implied in the novel that the meat from the battlefields is not wasted, instead, it is processed into "bully". Burgess's final solution to the problem of overpopulation is death and the State is the mass murderer.

4.2.9 Religion

The penultimate dystopian element that can be found in the novel is the State's treatment of religion. Religion is essentially abolished by the Government and God is perceived as an "outmoded concept" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 44). Instead, the State turns God into a caricature – Mr Livedog. Even the name God is twisted into *Dog*. The Prime Minister explains: "God is the enemy. We have conquered God and tamed him into a comic cartoon character for children to laugh at. Mr Livedog. God was a dangerous idea in people's minds. We have rid the civilized world of that idea." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 113).

However, even though religion is banned in the State, there are still some God-followers operating on an underground level. Moreover, at the beginning of the novel, when the regime is not as tyrannical as later, religious people are not pursued.

Nevertheless, there are not many believers among ordinary people. Tristram is shocked when he encounters a priest in a pub: "there aren't any priests any more. There haven't been priests for hundred years." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 39). Beatrice-Joanna has never seen a bible and Derek Foxe calls it "an old religious book full of smut" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 43-44). One of the exceptions is the vigorous Catholic Shonny, the husband of Beatrice-

Joanna's sister Mavis. A former member of the Celtic Union, he is extremely religious and organizes illegal masses.

When the policies of the State change and become harsher, priests are pursued and arrested. One of them is Shonny's acquaintance Father Shackel, who helped him to organize the masses. This underscores the State's totalitarian practices as the pursuit of dissidents is a typical element of authoritarian regimes. He is taken by the greyboys, and later is released when the society returns to religious habits.

The State's policies concerning religion gradually change when the famine hits the world. Fuelled by the fear that the famine represents God's punishment that has been sent upon humanity for their unnatural ways of life, many people return to religion. There is a growing demand for masses. Even the Government, in a state of desperation, attempts to pray: "I am instructed by the Home Secretary to read out the following, which is being read out also at this moment in the schools, hospitals, offices and factories of the kingdom. It is a prayer devised by the Ministry of Propaganda." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 119). Yet instead of God, they are praying to "the powers of evil" and beg them to stop ravaging the country (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 120). The blight causing the famine is impossible for the State to control, so even the formerly atheist Government turns to God as its last effort before the State disintegrates completely. Soon enough, priests are released from the prisons and congregations start to be organized in the streets. By the end of the novel, religious habits have become the new standard in society. For example, in the army, masses are given every day. The public turns from atheism to religion. What is more important – it seems to be the return to religion and procreation that saves the world population from starving, as food unexpectedly starts to grow again.

Religion is the underlying theme in *The Wanting Seed*, the overall message of the novel appears to be a religious one. Religious characters are portrayed mostly positively, as the only sane people in the mad world. Procreation is portrayed as the will of God: "'It's the will of God,' cried Shonny. 'Go forth and multiply.'" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 101). When humanity fails to fulfil God's will and diverts from the "natural" ways, the blight occurs as God's punishment. This is supported by the fact that no alternative explanation of the strange blight is provided in the novel. The overall message appears to be that one cannot strip

humankind from its freedom to procreate and practice religion, as it is the most severe violation of their rights.

4.2.10 The Foxe "outcasts"

Finally, the last dystopian element that can be identified in the novel is the employment of an "outcast" protagonist and depicting their rebellion against the regime. The main protagonists of the novel, Beatrice-Joanna and Tristram, struggle to conform and accept the State's ideology, both in their own specific way.

Tristram Foxe's nonconformism is most apparent in his perpetual strife with authorities. He fails to conform at work, hence the lack of promotion, and later he struggles in the army, which is the reason why he is sent to be slaughtered on the battlefield. Tristram's opinions and beliefs oppose the State's ideology. For example, at school, he teaches about "heretical" topics such as fertility. This gets him into a conflict with the new head of his Department, Wiltshire, who rebukes him for it:

> You said something like this: art, you said, cannot flourish in a society like ours, because, you seemed to say, art is the product of – I think this is the term you used – 'paternity lust'. You also said that the materials of the arts were, in effect, fertility symbols. (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 67)

His detestation of the State is further exacerbated by the fact that he does not get promoted because of his sexual orientation and family background. The pure fact that he had a child and has four siblings hinders his chances for promotion. The position that Tristram desires is instead offered to a more suitable younger candidate with a preferable sexual orientation, Wiltshire. This shows that Tristram fails to adapt to the rules of the new society.

Despite feeling betrayed by the current regime, Tristram lacks the courage to openly rebel against it. In a sense, he is more cowardly than Beatrice-Joanna. When she announces her illegal pregnancy to him, he is shattered and begs her to go to the Abortion Centre: "The Population Police have a lot of power. They can be very very nasty." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 73). He appears more rational and pragmatic than Beatrice-Joanna. Yet it is obvious that he is deeply dissatisfied with the regime, as Beatrice-Joanna reveals that he often unconsciously ventilates the suppressed thoughts in his sleep.

Tristram is not religious – he appears to be indoctrinated by the State's propaganda: "There is no God." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 74). However, only a few moments later he admits that he sometimes contemplates God's existence: "… don't tell anybody I said that. I didn't say there was a God. I just said I wondered sometimes, that's all." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 74). He does not trust his wife and he admits that he does not even trust himself. Apparently, the State managed to penetrate even the most intimate relationship between him and his wife.

After he escapes from the prison, his character slightly changes as he seems to have gained more confidence. He is extremely determined to find his wife and reunite with her. Nevertheless, in the army, he is the misfit again. He is once more reproached for teaching about unsuitable topics, this time by Lieutenant-Colonel Williams: "You seem to have been holding certain discussions with the men. Something about Who Is The Enemy? and What's All The Fighting About?" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 225). Throughout his stay in the army, he never ceases to question what is happening around him and what is the true purpose of the training. He is also the only one who exposes the hidden truth behind the Extermination Sessions.

Tristram is a historian and he is able to see through the regime changes, interpret them and predict what is coming next. It is through Tristram that Burgess introduces his concept of the cyclical history to the reader. Tristram serves as a sort of guide for the reader – he often comments on the political developments and the events in the novel.

Beatrice-Joanna Foxe is the second protagonist of the novel, whose storyline the novel follows. Her rebellion against the State consists of ignoring the one-child policy and deciding not to terminate her pregnancy. She is determined to give birth to the twins, unafraid of the serious repercussions that she might have to face. Beatrice-Joanna can be characterised as very feminine and purely instinct-driven. She glows with "the threat of fecundity", as Burgess describes her (*The Wanting Seed* 6). She is struggling to understand the current state of affairs and refuses to accept the State's propaganda for she perceives homosexuality as unnatural. Rather than being pragmatic or led by reason, she follows her instincts, as her lover Derek notes: "You're still a creature of instinct, after all these years of education and slogans and subliminal film propaganda. You don't give a damn about the state of the world,

the state of the State." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 42). She does not understand politics, nor she is trying to. Beatrice-Joanna believes in God and for her, God is a greater authority than the State: "If God made us what we are, why should we have to worry about what the State tells us to do? God's stronger and wiser than the State. Isn't He?" (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 73).

Maternal instinct is the driving force behind her actions. According to her, the greatest injustice done by the State is letting her only son Roger die. She feels that she is "entitled" to have a child (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 72). That is the principal reason why she chooses to refuse abortion and live in hiding throughout her pregnancy. In the hiding, she is extremely protective of her twins. She is indecisive when it comes to love – she cannot determine whether she loves Tristram or Derek. Her adultery is explained simply: "She needed two men in her life, her day to be salted by infidelity." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 222). In the end, she chooses Tristram as he embodies the stability which she seeks in a husband.

Both Beatrice-Joanna and Tristram are portrayed as the misfits in the "insane" society, as the representatives of old values. The contrast is most noticeable when comparing the two characters with Tristram's brother and Beatrice-Joanna's lover, Derek Foxe. Derek is nothing like his brother or Beatrice-Joanna. He is extremely pragmatic and ambitious, he is an opportunist. Derek understands the role of the Government: "You'd have no life at all to live if it weren't for people like me." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 43). He argues that without the State, people would starve, and only thanks to the Government "a sort of stasis" is achieved (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 43). Even later in the novel, when the Ministry loses its negative prefix, he retains his high position there. Derek Foxe represents the sort of power-driven people who benefit from every regime and every Government, as they are cunningly able to adopt their demeanour to whatever the current regime perceives as desirable.

4.2.11 The warning of *The Wanting Seed*

The last aspect of the novel which has to be discussed is the question of whether it provides any warning for the human society. In *The Wanting Seed*, one can identify several phenomena that Burgess considered alarming and aimed to criticize and satirize them – authoritarianism, the limitation of procreation, the abandonment of religion, war and the

army. Burgess is a satirist aiming primarily at the authorities, the Government, the police and the army, but at the whole human society as well. In this novel, Burgess appears as an advocate for free will that is always somehow limited under the influence of the State or different authorities.

However, when it comes to the question of how all of this can be prevented, this is where the novel fails. There is the final happy reunion of the two protagonists by the seaside, with the sea serving as a symbol of life: "The wind rises … we must try to live." (Burgess, *The Wanting Seed* 285). Yet, in the context of the whole novel, this ending feels a bit unsatisfactory. The principal cause for the feeling of hopelessness might be Burgess's portrayal of political development as a cycle. At the end of the novel, the protagonists find themselves at the beginning of the same phase as in the first chapter of the novel. It seems that the cycle cannot be interrupted and the world population is doomed to go through the different phases again and again. Burgess offers no solace, no prospect of breaking the vicious cycle.

Conclusion

This bachelor thesis focused on dystopian literature – it provided its definition, determined its key elements, and outlined the development of the genre. By introducing the trends that influenced dystopian literature throughout the past centuries, it demonstrated that dystopian visions are always connected to the time of their origin and mostly correspond with the authors' political beliefs. The practical part of the thesis consisted of the analysis of the key dystopian elements in one novel – Burgess's *The Wanting Seed*.

The Wanting Seed contains several dystopian elements, although not all typical elements of the genre can be found in the novel. Burgess utilizes those elements to create a vision of a future where the primary objective of the governmental authorities is to restrict individual freedom in order to avert the impending catastrophe of population overgrowth. The freedom of the citizens is suppressed by the State, mainly via the employment of strict population control policies. Food is rationed and the citizens are not allowed to have more than one child per family, homosexuality is preferred. The adherence to the policies is coerced by the police and later by specialized corps called the Population Police. Another typical dystopian element, the misuse of technology, cannot be spotted in the novel, although some sort of technological development is implied through the depiction of the character's gadgets. Not many examples of the State's propaganda can be identified in the novel – its role in the novel is only peripheral. Artificial war is devised by the State as a final solution to the problem of overpopulation. Finally, religion is the underlying theme of the whole novel – at the beginning, it is prohibited, but the novel captures the society's return to religious habits. The analysis of the elements helped to understand what trends the author criticized and perceived as negative, thus it contributed to the understanding of the overall message of the novel.

When comparing the novel to Burgess's more popular dystopia *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Wanting Seed* is a less experimental novel containing more typical elements of the dystopian genre. In *The Wanting Seed,* there is a greater emphasis on politics and the explanation of the political regime in the society, whereas in *A Clockwork Orange* the description of the dystopian society is not provided – the dystopian setting is only used as a background for the argument about free will. In the case of *A Clockwork Orange*, Burgess tried to portray a

society inspired by his present days rather than imagining a society in the distant future. *The Wanting Seed* takes place in the future, as the world map has vastly changed, yet Burgess also used his contemporary England as a source of inspiration. Furthermore, *The Wanting Seed* lacks the language inventiveness of *A Clockwork Orange*. Whilst language is one of the main themes of the latter, it does not play any significant role in the former. Nevertheless, in both novels, the State and the Government are depicted predominantly negatively, as they are not reluctant to limit the citizens' freedom to achieve their goals. In both novels, the members of the police are recruited from young criminals and the policemen are corrupted and abuse their power. Finally, the two novels share the underlying theological argument about the Original Sin, undoubtedly influenced by Burgess's Catholicism.

To conclude, the analysis of Burgess's less-known dystopian novel *The Wanting Seed* hopefully contributed to the perception of Burgess as a satirist and novelist who was preoccupied with the issue of human freedom and free will. Being a great admirer of Orwell and Huxley, Burgess attempted to construct his own dystopian vision of the ominous future. He created a dynamic dystopian novel, in which the regime changes according to different phases of a cycle. In it, he expressed several concerns and anxieties related to the time of its origin and satirized some aspects of the British society. Yet, from today's perspective, some aspects of Burgess's novel simply appear old-fashioned or even problematic, for example his treatment of homosexuality. Despite the fact that some of the expressed anxieties are outdated, the principal subject matter of the novel is still relevant – that is overpopulation and its repercussions. Throughout the novel, Burgess "suggests" not one but a few potential "solutions" to the problem ranging from the limitation of procreation to the extermination sessions and cannibalism. Although his vision of the future of humankind seems to be inherently pessimistic, the novel still stresses the innate vitality of the human race. Burgess appears to be the defender of "human nature", of the basic human rights to reproduce and to practice religion. Overall, *The Wanting Seed* can be placed among other dystopian works of the 1960s, as it is not the only novel of the decade which expressed the concerns that the extensive population growth will have grave consequences for humanity.

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